



# Aircraft Cargo Handling Supervisors

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## Job Overview

Aircraft Cargo Handling Supervisors play an important role in the safe operation of cargo flights. They oversee and ensure proper and safe movement of cargo on aircraft. They direct ground crew in the loading, unloading, securing, and staging of aircraft cargo or baggage. They determine the quantity and orientation of cargo, compute aircraft center of gravity, and sign the load plan or manifest.

Aircraft Cargo Handling Supervisors, also known as Aircraft Loadmasters, originated as a military occupation in the 1950s, while some functions were performed a decade earlier during World War II. Loadmasters in the U.S. Air Force travel as a member of the flight crew. They load and unload aircraft, perform preflight and postflight aircraft checks, and compute weight and balance. They ensure the safety and comfort of passengers, secure cargo during flight, and airdrop cargo and personnel.

The duties of a civilian Aircraft Cargo Handling Supervisor differ from the military classification in that the Air Force Loadmaster travels on the aircraft and civilian Aircraft Cargo Handling Supervisors remain at the airport.

In addition to Loadmaster, an Aircraft Cargo Handling Supervisor may also be called a Baggage Handling Supervisor, Ramp Boss or Supervisor, Air Cargo Supervisor, Load Planner or Supervisor, or Ground Crew Supervisor.

## Typical Tasks

- ➔ Determine the quantity and orientation of cargo and compute an aircraft's center of gravity.
- ➔ Supervise the distribution of cargo in such a manner that space use is maximized.
- ➔ Calculate load weights for different aircraft compartments, using charts and computers.
- ➔ Brief aircraft passengers on safety and emergency procedures.
- ➔ Direct ground crews in the loading, unloading, securing, and staging of aircraft cargo or baggage.
- ➔ Confer with customers, supervisors, contractors, and other staff to exchange information and to resolve problems.
- ➔ Provide orientation and training for new staff.

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- ➔ Ensure all governmental regulations, company procedures, and safety and security requirements are followed.
- ➔ Recommend and implement measures to improve worker motivation, performance, work methods, and customer services.

*Detailed descriptions of this occupation may be found in the Occupational Information Network (O\*NET) at [online.onetcenter.org](http://online.onetcenter.org).*

## Important Skills, Knowledge, and Abilities

- ➔ Active Listening — Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
- ➔ Speaking — Talking to others to convey information effectively.
- ➔ Instructing — Teaching others how to do something.
- ➔ Coordination — Adjusting actions in relation to others' actions.
- ➔ Mathematics — Using mathematics to solve problems.
- ➔ Transportation — Knowledge of principles and methods for moving people or goods by air, rail, sea, or road, including the relative costs and benefits.
- ➔ English Language — Knowledge of the structure and content of the English language including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar.
- ➔ Public Safety and Security — Knowledge of relevant equipment, policies, procedures, and strategies to promote effective local, state, or national security operations for the protection of people, data, property, and institutions.
- ➔ Administration and Management — Knowledge of business and management principles involved in strategic planning, resource allocation, human resources modeling, leadership technique, production methods, and coordination of people and resources.
- ➔ Problem Sensitivity — The ability to tell when something is wrong or is likely to go wrong. It does not involve solving the problem, only recognizing there is a problem.
- ➔ Written Comprehension — The ability to read and understand information and ideas presented in writing.
- ➔ Written Expression — The ability to communicate information and ideas in writing so others will understand.

## Work Environment

Aircraft Cargo Handling Supervisors work in a high-pressure, constantly changing environment. Ensuring that cargo is loaded and placed properly can be stressful. Cargo that is not adequately restrained can shift and lead to accidents. Hazardous materials not properly handled can cause fires or toxic fumes. Aircraft Cargo Handling Supervisors work outside in all kinds of weather conditions. In the military, they travel with the aircraft to monitor cargo during flight. Civilian Aircraft Cargo Handling Supervisors usually work 40 hours a week. Since airports operate around the clock, they work a variety of shifts. Although Air Force policy limits Loadmasters to 120 days a year, they frequently work 160 to 200 days a year.

Some Aircraft Cargo Handling Supervisors belong to the International Brotherhood of Teamsters Airline Division.

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## California's Job Outlook and Wages

The California Outlook and Wage table below represents the occupation across all industries.

Standard Occupational Classification	Estimated Number of Workers May 2005	2006 Wage Range (per hour)
Aircraft Cargo Handling Supervisors 53-1011	870	\$13.40 to \$23.76

*Wages do not include self-employment.*

*Average annual openings include new jobs plus net replacements.*

*Source: [www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov](http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov), Employment Projections by Occupation and OES Employment & Wages by Occupation, Labor Market Information Division, Employment Development Department.*

## Trends

According to national projections data, employment growth for Aircraft Cargo Handling Supervisors is expected to be about average compared with all other occupations.

In the air cargo industry, the tasks of building up pallets and loading/unloading aircraft are increasingly being contracted to outside companies. Therefore, Aircraft Cargo Handling Supervisors oversee ground crews that are employed by companies other than the airlines. Some Aircraft Cargo Handling Supervisor positions are beginning to move in this direction as well.

Cargo traffic is expected to increase with the economy and growing world trade. It will likely be stimulated by the development of global electronic commerce and manufacturing trends such as just-in-time delivery, which requires more materials to be shipped rapidly.

## Training/Requirements/Apprenticeships

Aircraft Cargo Handling Supervisors should have a high school diploma or equivalent with coursework in mathematics and general science. They must have a valid California driver license with a good driving record. They must be able to understand the English language and speak it fluently. In addition, good leadership skills, the ability to motivate and work as part of a team, and excellent communication skills are highly desirable.

Work experience in a related occupation is the most common path into this occupation. Many employers prefer a bachelor's degree, one-to-five years of related experience and/or training, or a combination of education and experience. Previous supervisory experience in the transportation industry may be required. In addition, employers may require training in dangerous goods acceptance and/or live animal regulations.

Candidates may be required to pass a pre-employment physical exam, drug screening, and obtain a security clearance. If they are responsible for calculating weight and balance and signing the load manifest form, they are required to be in the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) mandated drug and alcohol screening program.

In the Air Force, completion of the Aircraft Loadmaster course is required to enter the Aircraft Loadmaster series.

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## Recommended High School Course Work

High school students interested in this kind of work should take coursework in mathematics, science, computer technology, and English.

## Where Do I Find the Job?

Direct application to employers remains one of the most effective job search methods.

Use the *Search for Employers by Industry* feature on the *Career Center* page at [www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov](http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov) to locate employers in your area. Search under the following industry names to get a list of private firms and their addresses:

- Couriers
- Scheduled Freight Air Transportation
- Scheduled Passenger Air Transportation
- Temporary Help Services

Search these **yellow page** headings for listings of private firms:

- Air Cargo & Package Express Service
- Air Courier Service
- Airlines
- Airports & Airport Operation
- Freight Forwarding

## Where Can the Job Lead?

With additional training and experience, Aircraft Cargo Handling Supervisors can promote to Cargo Managers or Ramp Managers.

In the Air Force, Aircraft Loadmasters start as an apprentice and with additional education and training can promote to journey-level, craftsman-level, and superintendent-level positions.

### Related Occupations

Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Managers  
(See Logistics Profile and/or *Manufacturing Careers*)

Transportation Inspectors (See Logistics Profile)

Cargo and Freight Agents (See Logistics Profile and/or *Manufacturing Careers*)

## Other Sources

Air Cargo World  
[www.aircargoworld.com](http://www.aircargoworld.com)

Air Transport Association of America  
[www.airlines.org](http://www.airlines.org)

Aviation Jobs  
[www.avjobs.com](http://www.avjobs.com)

California Association of Regional  
Occupational Centers and Programs  
[www.carocp.org](http://www.carocp.org)

Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)  
[www.faa.gov](http://www.faa.gov)

International Brotherhood of Teamsters,  
Airline Division  
[www.teamster.org/divisions/airline](http://www.teamster.org/divisions/airline)

Professional Loadmaster Association  
[www.loadmasters.com](http://www.loadmasters.com)

U.S. Air Force  
[www.airforce.com](http://www.airforce.com)